



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **The \$125 Million Rural Nebraska Investment --USDA Rural Development Releases FY 2004 Annual Report--**

**Lincoln, Neb., February 2, 2005** -- USDA Rural Development's Nebraska 2004 Annual Report was released this week revealing close to \$125 million being invested in rural Nebraska.

"Fiscal Year 2004 was a year of achievement for Nebraska Rural Development and we are challenged to do even more in 2005," stated Nebraska State Director Jim Barr, USDA Rural Development. "The goals are high as we work toward universal broadband access in rural America, strengthening distance learning, telemedicine and critical health care in rural communities, and encouraging homeownership and entrepreneurship."

Report highlights include:

- In Fiscal Year 2004 over 1,200 jobs were created and saved in rural Nebraska.
- Business development benefited through \$24 million while 18 producer groups received grants of \$3.7 million to assist in agricultural ventures.
- Rural farmers, ranchers and businesses received \$182,000 in grants for 14 renewable energy and energy efficiency improvement projects.
- Medical services will be expanded and enhanced benefiting over 187,000 rural residents via \$285,000 telemedicine grant.
- New distribution and transmission lines serving 1,080 new customers were built and system improvements made through electric loans of \$15.4 million.
- Thanks to \$46.5 million in loans, 705 rural Nebraska households became homeowners.
- Essential home repairs were provided to 149 rural homeowners via \$766,000 in loans and grants.
- Loan of \$345,000 built new apartment complex offering 11 units of affordable apartment living to rural residents.
- Rental assistance of \$6.3 million provided affordable rent payments for 2,382 tenants.
- Over 18,000 rural residents received new or improved water or sewer services through \$15.1 million in loans and grants.
- Essential community facilities serving over 97,000 rural residents were provided via loans and grants of \$10.6 million.

"Rural Nebraska has significant advantages—lower costs of living and a high quality of life and workforce, affordable land for business development and expansion, and a tradition of grassroots initiative and community involvement," stated Barr. "However, modern communications, transportation, community infrastructure, and access to venture capital are some of the key elements to unlocking this potential and these are several of the areas where USDA Rural Development can help."

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